

Sheriff Shon = Sheriff Sean?

arts

EPIC SKETCH



No doubt about it, Shon Wilson has been busy, busy, busy in the past two years on the Charlotte theater scene. Most notably perhaps, she's been the new kid in the Children's Theatre production of Bob Inman's new play, *The Drama Club*. But she's also been a fixture in Theatre Charlotte's *just do it* series and a star in the recent Actor's Theatre of Charlotte production of *My First Time* – her third appearance on Stonewall Street – with additional appearances for Collaborative Arts and the dearly departed Epic Arts Repertory Theatre.

While Wilson's abilities to write and direct were embedded in her winsome efforts in *just do it*, what I hadn't seen were examples of her talents as a producer. I finally caught up with those last Friday when Wilson's Sketch Theatre Acting Company presented *Epic Sketch* at Duke Energy Theatre. All of the 22 sketches weren't of the same high quality, but the best were among the sharpest and gutsiest we've seen here in recent years, easily catapulting Wilson and her Sketch Theatre to the same lofty plateau occupied by Sean Keenan and Robot Johnson.

Sean and Shon. You wonder whether they had to endure some strange initiation rite to get into this biz.

A couple of themes recurred in *Epic Sketch*, an understandable trace of *just do it* influence. There were four "Great Moments in History Revisited" segments, all written by

Wilson, including “Million Man March” and – to the discomfiture of Thomas Jefferson – “Founding Fathers.” Other writers got in on the fun for seven “Celebrity Spokesperson” blackouts, all acted by Mimi Harkness. My favorites here were Sinead O’Connor, penned by Wilson, Mona Lisa by Matt Webster, and wildest of all, John Mayer’s penis by Aby Pagan.

Another theme that escaped titling in the program were a couple of origins sketches. In “Something You May Have Heard About Moby,” Webster shows us how Melville came up with the name of his great American novel, and in “Molsen Gold,” Webster and Joel Sumner *acted* the two drunken Canadian ice fishermen who invented the sport of curling, arguably the funniest sketch of the night, written by Michelle Brzycki.

Merrie Olde England was subjected to some wicked revisionism in two other sketches that were more ready for prime time than the bulk of the comedy that airs on latenight Saturday TV, both involving Sumner and Webster. In “Shakespeare’s Shyster,” written by Webster, Sumner portrayed a nonplussed Bard as his Hollywood agent (Webster) gave him pointers on how to make such diamonds-in-the-rough as *Romeo & Juliet*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet* more marketable. Sumner’s one script, “Around the Round Table,” was a gem, with the writer playing straight as a reporter interviewing the key figures in the Guinevere–Lancelot scandal, played by Webster, John Cunningham, and Pagan, who also directed.

Upshot of all this deep investigative reporting: the knights of the round table came a lot in Camelot.

For sheer *chutzpah*, I have to go back to the early part of the evening when Wilson had the audacity to mock the oratory, self-importance, and over-the-top flamboyance of North Carolina’s own Maya Angelou. Shocking. Hilarious. Perverse. Necessary.

With a solid core of writers and actors, Wilson has built Sketch Theatre into a sturdy vital troupe. My only real complaint about Wilson as a producer is that she isn’t *productive* enough! Because I was up in New York for the company’s two-day debut last summer, I was more than seven months late in appreciating all they have to offer. How long will it take readers to catch up with the excellence of Sketch Theatre who read this review if they’ve never heard of them before? Too long, unless Wilson & Co. step up the pace.